

CHAPTER 3 SECTION 15.9

CHEMONUCLEOLYSIS

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I. PROCEDURE CODE

62292

II. DESCRIPTION

The dissolution of the nucleus pulposus of an intervertebral disk by injection of a chemolytic agent, e.g., the enzyme chymopapain; used especially in the treatment of herniation of a disk.

POLICY

A. Chemonucleolysis utilizing chymopapain is covered only for the treatment of patients with documented herniated lumbar intervertebral discs whose signs and symptoms have not responded to conservative therapy over an adequate period of time.

B. Based on time, skill, and risk, chemonucleolysis will be paid at 50% of the prevailing fee for a laminectomy (63005).

C. Chemonucleolysis utilizing chymopapain in the treatment of herniated discs in areas other than the lumbar spine is not covered because efficaciousness and safety have not been shown in other spinal regions.

D. Chemonucleolysis utilizing any similar substance, other than chymopapain, in any area of the spine is considered unproven and not covered.

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